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DMME Sets Public Hearing on Amendments to Coal Mine Safety Regulations

Richmond, VA—A public hearing on proposed language to amend state coal mine safety regulations will be held on September 10, 1998 in Big Stone Gap, VA, the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) announced today. The public hearing will be held at 10 a.m. at DMME's Buchanan-Smith Office Building located at 3405 Mountain Empire Road, adjacent to the Mountain Empire Community College campus.

The proposed amendments affect regulations governing diesel engine mechanics, advanced first aid, installation and use of cabs and canopies, surface mine blasting, mine communications, and automated temporary roof support systems. Published in the Virginia Register of Regulations on August 17, 1998, the proposed amendments would implement the recommendations identified during DMME's regulation review under Executive Order Fifteen (94).

Proposed changes include the repeal of two regulations. The Board of Coal Mining Examiners' has recommended the repeal of regulations governing diesel engine mechanics in underground coal mines because the essential elements in the regulation have been incorporated in the certification regulation for coal miners. DMME is proposing to repeal the rules and regulations governing advanced first aid because the essential elements in the regulation have been incorporated in certification regulations, the Coal Mine Safety Act, or mine emergency response plans submitted to the Division of Mines by mine operators.

Amendments to the regulation governing the installation and use of cabs and canopies have been proposed to protect miners from roof falls while operating self-propelled mobile equipment at the face of coal mines. The regulation addresses general requirements for cabs and canopies on self-propelled mobile equipment and adopts standards for loads and capacities.

Changes to regulations governing blasting in surface mining operations have been proposed to ensure mine blasting is performed safely and that miners, persons living close to the mine, and nearby property are protected from fly rock and other hazards associated with blasting.

Proposed amendments to the regulation governing the disruption of communication in underground coal mines are needed to ensure that there is a system of communication between miners working underground and competent persons on the surface at the mine. The regulation addresses general requirements for communications in case of an emergency.

Amendments to regulations governing automated temporary roof support systems (ATRS) are needed to protect miners from roof falls during the installation of permanent roof supports in a newly mined area of an underground mine. The regulation addresses general requirements for machines using ATRS, approvals and waivers, and makes the requirements consistent with current safety standards for ATRS.

Many of the proposed amendments to the coal mine safety regulations are needed to reflect changes in technology, avoid conflicts with federal regulations, and eliminate duplicative information.

Public comments on the proposed amendments may be submitted until 5 p.m. October 16, 1998 to Frank A. Linkous, Division Chief, Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, Division of Mines, 3405 Mountain Empire Road, P.O. Drawer 900, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219, (276) 523-8224, Fax (276) 523-8239 or toll free 1-800-828-1120 (VA Relay Center).

Special accommodations for the disabled will be made available at the hearing on request. Anyone needing special accommodations should contact the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy by September 3, 1998 by calling the Virginia Relay Center TTY/TDD 1-800-821-1120 or 1140.

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